

*Just as Mazzini best symbolizes the ties between early 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalism and liberalism, the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) represents the later links between nationalism and conservatism, militarism, and authoritarianism. The son of a Prussian general, Treitschke taught history at several universities, including the prestigious University of Berlin, where he concluded his career. He also was a member of the German representative assembly, the Reichstag, from 1871 to 1884. His best-known work is his seven-volume History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century. In this and his numerous other writings, lectures, and speeches, Treitschke acclaimed militarism, authoritarianism, and war as the path to German greatness. His views struck a responsive chord among many Germans who feared socialism and democracy and yearned for the day when Germany would be recognized as the world's most powerful nation.*

### On the German Character

Depth of thought, Idealism. cosmopolitan views; transcendent philosophy which boldly oversteps (or freely looks over) the separating barriers of finite existence; familiarity with every human thought and feeling, the desire to traverse the world-wide realm of ideas in common with the foremost intellects of all nations and all times. All that has at all times been held to be characteristic of the Germans and has always been praised as the essence of German character and breeding.

The simple loyalty of the Germans contrasts remarkably with the lack of chivalry in the English character. This seems to be due to the fact that in England physical Culture is sought, not in the exercise of noble arms, but in sports like boxing, swimming, and rowing, sports which undoubtedly have their value, but which obviously tend to encourage a brutal and purely athletic point of view, and the single and superficial ambition of getting a first prize.<sup>1</sup>

### On the State

The state is a moral community, which is called upon to educate the human race by positive achievement. Its ultimate object is that a nation should develop in it, a nation distinguished by a real national character. To achieve this state is the highest moral duty for nation and individual alike.

All private quarrels must be forgotten when the state is in danger.

At the moment when the state cries Out that its very life is at stake, social selfishness must cease and party hatred be hushed. The individual must forget his egoism, and feel that he is a member of the whole body.

The most important possession of a state, its be-all and end-all, is power. He who is not man enough to look this truth in the face should not meddle in politics. 'The state is not physical power as an end in itself, it is power to protect and promote the higher interests. Power must justify itself by being applied for the greatest good of mankind. It is the highest moral duty of the state to increase its power.

The true greatness of the state is that it links the past with the present and future: consequently, the individual has no right to regard the state as a means for attaining his own ambitions in life. Every extension of the activities of the state is beneficial and wise if it arouses, promotes, and purifies the independence of free and reasoning men, it is evil when it kills and stunts the independence of free men. It is men who make history.

The state does not stand for the whole life of the nation. Its function is essentially protective and administrative. The state does not swallow up everything; it can only influence by external compulsion. It represents the nation from the point of view of power. For in the state it is not only the great primitive forces of human nature

<sup>1</sup> Treitschke is correct in drawing a distinction between English and German sports. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the English prized comparative athletic contests, while the Germans favored group calisthenics and exercises.

that come into play; the state is the basis of all national life. Briefly, it may be affirmed that a state which is not capable of forming and maintaining an external Organization of its civilizing activities deserves to perish.

Only the truly great and powerful states ought to exist. Small states are unable to protect their subjects against external enemies, moreover, they are incapable of producing genuine patriotism or national pride and are sometimes incapable of Kultur<sup>2</sup> in great dimensions. Weimar produced a Goethe and a Schiller;<sup>3</sup> still these poets would have been greater had they been citizens of a German national state.

### On Monarchy

The will of the state is in a monarchy, the expression of the will of one man who wears the crown by virtue of the historic right of a certain family; with him the final authority rests. Nothing in a monarchy can be done contrary to the will of the monarch. In a democracy, plurality, the will of the people, expresses the will of the state. A monarchy excels any other form of government, including the democratic, in achieving unity and power in a nation. It is for this reason that monarchy seems so natural, and that it makes such an appeal to the popular understanding. We Germans had an experience of this in the first years of our new empire.<sup>4</sup> How wonderfully the idea of a united Fatherland was embodied for us in the person of the venerable Emperor! How much it meant to us that we could feel once more: "That man is Germany; there is no doubting it."

<sup>2</sup> German for culture or civilization.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1719-1832) and Johann von Schiller (1738-1805) were German poets and dramatists who lived before Germany became a unified state. They both spent a good part of their adult lives in the city of Weimar, the capital of the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar.

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### On War

The idea of perpetual peace is an illusion supported only by those of weak character. It has always been the weary, spiritless, and exhausted apes which have played with the dream of perpetual peace. A thousand touching portraits testify to the sacred power of the love which a righteous war awakes in noble nations. It is altogether impossible that peace be maintained in a world bristling with arms, and even God will see to it that war always recurs as a drastic medicine for the human race. Among great states the greatest political sin and the most contemptible is feebleness...

War is elevating because the individual disappears before the great conception of the state. The devotion of the members of a community to each other is nowhere so splendidly conspicuous as in war.

Modern wars are not waged for the sake of goods and resources. What is at stake is the sublime moral good of national honor, which has something in the nature of unconditional sanctity, and compels the individual to sacrifice himself for it.

### On the English

The hypocritical Englishman, with the Bible in one hand and a pipe of opium<sup>5</sup> in the other, possesses no redeeming qualities. The nation was an ancient robber-knight, in full armor, lance in hand, on every one of the world's trade routes.

The English possess a commercial spirit, a love of money which has killed every sentiment of honor and every distinction of right and wrong. English cowardice and sensuality are hidden behind unctuous, theological fine talk which is to us free-thinking German heretics among all the sins of English nature the most repugnant. In England all notions of honor and class prejudices vanish before the power of money, whereas the German

<sup>5</sup> Treitschke is making a point about what he considers the hypocrisy of the British, professed Christians who nonetheless sell opium to the Chinese. See Lin Zexu's Letter to Queen Victoria in Chapter 34.

nobility has remained poor but chivalrous. That last indispensable bulwark against the brutalization of society - the duel - has gone out of fashion in England and soon disappeared, to be supplanted by the riding whip.<sup>6</sup> This was a triumph of vulgarity. The newspapers, in their accounts of aristocratic weddings, record in exact detail how much each wedding guest has contributed in the form of presents or in cash; even the youth of the nation have turned their sports into a business, and contend for valuable prizes, whereas the German students wrought havoc on their countenances for the sake of a real or imaginary honor.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Aristocratic males frequently settled disputes concerning their honor by dueling. To Treitschke, abandoning the duel for less manly pursuits such as hunting and horseback riding was a sign of decadence.

<sup>7</sup> Treitschke is again using examples from sports to underscore the differences between the Germans and English. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century English sports such as rugby and football (American soccer) were organized into professional leagues; the Germans were still willing to be scarred in duels to defend their honor.

### On Jews

The Jews at one time played a necessary role in German history, because of their ability in the management of money. But now that the Aryans<sup>8</sup> have become accustomed to the idiosyncrasies of finance, the Jews are no longer necessary. The international Jew, hidden in tile mask of different nationalities, is a disintegrating influence; he can be of no further use to the world. It is necessary to speak openly about the Jews, undisturbed by the fact that the Jewish press befouls what is purely historical truth.

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<sup>8</sup> Today the term Aryan, or Indo-Iranian, refers to a branch of the Indo-European family of languages, which also includes Baltic, Slavic, Armenian, Greek, Celtic, Latin, and Germanic. Indo-Iranian includes Bengali, Persian, Punjabi, and Hindi. In Treitschke's day Aryan was used not only to refer to the pre-historic language from which all these languages derived but also the racial group that spoke the language and supposedly migrated from its base in central Asia to Europe and India in the distant past. In the racial mythology that grew in connection with the term and later was embraced by Hitler and the Nazis, the Aryans provided Europe's original racial stock.

***Questions for Analysis***

1. *What, according to Treitschke, is the relationship between the state and the individual?*
2. *Why, according to Treitschke, is monarchy superior to democracy? How do his views conflict with those of Rousseau?*
3. *What qualities of Germans set them apart from other peoples, especially the English and the Jews, according to Treitschke?*
4. *In what ways are the views of Treitschke a repudiation of the ideals of the Enlightenment?*
5. *Mazzini felt that all nations had a contribution to make to human progress. What is Treitschke's view?*
6. *If Mazzini and Treitschke had ever had an opportunity to sit down in the same room to discuss politics, what would they have argued about? What might they have agreed upon?*